

**Testimony of Paul A. Folmsbee**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Mali**  
**March 25, 2015**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to come before you as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Mali. I deeply appreciate the confidence and trust the President and Secretary of State have shown in nominating me for this position.

I am supported here today by my friends and colleagues from the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs and USAID. My wife Angelika Chin is also a U.S. diplomat and is serving at our Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. Unfortunately she could not be here today.

My career in the Foreign Service began in 1987 and has led me to assignments all over the world. The bulk of my assignments have been to developing countries including Kenya, Haiti, Gabon and Tanzania. In Iraq, in 2007, I embedded with the 2/82 Airborne and ran a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Sadr City and Adhamiya in downtown Baghdad. In Afghanistan in 2011, I embedded with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry as the Senior Civilian Representative for Regional Command East and worked on expanding governance and economic development programs. If confirmed, I would draw upon these experiences and many others to deepen U.S. – Mali ties as we continue to work towards our mutual goals of combating extremism, strengthening democratic governance and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Mali continues to emerge from the most serious security, political, and development crises it has faced since independence. It is rebuilding its social, economic, and governance institutions following a rebellion in the north, the March 2012 coup d'état, and the subsequent takeover of parts of northern Mali by extremists. Poverty both exacerbates Mali's conflicts and underscores its capacity challenges. Mali is ranked 176<sup>th</sup> of the 187 nations in the United Nation's 2014 Human Development Index. In addition, conflict with northern groups, the recent

coup and the events that followed revealed the fragility of Mali's government institutions. Despite those challenges, Mali peacefully elected a President and National Assembly in 2013. The new government has made national reconciliation a top priority and donors are engaging with the country. It is within this context that U.S. engagement will be critical as we foster democratic values, promote good governance and engender peace and security. U.S. assistance programs will continue to increase access to education and health services, improve nutrition and sanitation, strengthen Malians' food security, and facilitate inclusive economic growth. One of the key strategies for deepening economic growth is expanding the resiliency of poor communities so that they will not be vulnerable to the shocks of extreme weather and conflict.

Security and stability remain a major challenge. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by Security Council Resolution 2100 in April of 2013 to support the stabilization of the country and to carry out a number of security-related tasks. Our government continues to fully support that effort by providing training, equipment and intelligence. The success of this mission is critical to the long-term stability of the country.

Another key objective is to aid in the reformation of the Malian security sector by supporting institutions that can manage internal and external security threats, contribute to national and regional stability while adhering to civilian authority, and respect international law and human rights norms. While there are a number of areas in the security sector that require investment, the near- to medium-term priority for U.S. assistance are those activities that will refine the national security strategy, repair civilian-military relations, improve access to justice in the north, and encourage the legislature and civil society stakeholders to hold security services accountable.

The government has engaged in internationally-supported efforts to advance peace talks with the northern armed groups. These talks are ongoing and their positive outcome is far from assured. The U.S. government will continue to participate in these negotiations as an observer and will also continue to look for opportunities to support a balanced and peaceful way forward.

The outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa and the threat it represented to Mali punctuated the need for urgent cooperation on health matters. Early containment of the outbreak was a major priority for both the government of Mali, international partners, and the United States. Fortunately, the threat was successfully contained, aided in part by direct U.S. assistance from the State Department, the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, if confirmed, I will look to you for counsel and support to ensure that our bilateral relationship remains firmly rooted in our shared vision of a democratic and prosperous Mali. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.